DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 370 507 HE 027 467

AUTHOR	Garland, Peter H.; Grace, Thomas W.
TITLE	New Perspectives for Student Affairs Professionals: Evolving Realities, Responsibilities and Roles. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, D.C.; George Washington Univ., Washington, DC. School of Education and Human Development.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-HE-93-7
PUB DATE	Jun 94
CONTRACT	RR930200
NOTE	4p.; For the full length report of which this is a digest, see HE 027 468.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, George Washington University, One Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036 ($1).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Responsibility; College Students; Continuing Education; Counseling Services; *Educational Change; Higher Education; Institutional Role; Professional Education; Program Administration; Responsibility; School Holding Power; *Staff Role; Student Development; *Student Personnel Services; *Student Personnel Workers
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

The efforts of college student affairs professionals aimed at improving student life, integrating new student groups, and attracting and retaining students are becoming critical to institutions attempting to maintain enrollments of qualified students, ensure academic achievement, place graduates, and develop supportive alumni. Changes in student affairs contexts and clienteles involve uneven success with students from underrepresented groups, demographic shifts, expanding use of information technologies, increasing violence, the burden of debt, and new emphasis on accountability. An expanded role for student affairs is demanded, which would require creatively and collaboratively integrating the institution's development with that of students. This new role calls for changes in the programs and services offered, the professional skills employed by student affairs professionals, and the content of the preparation and continuing development of professionals. The new role demands professionals who are competent in counseling and administration, organizational development, quality management, planning, evaluation and research, and current issues in higher education. Responsibilities of student affairs professionals, institutions, and personnel preparation programs are listed. (JDD)

June 1994
EDO-HE-93-7

ERIC® DIGEST

ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education; The George Washington University; One Dupont Circle, Suite 630; Washington, DC 20036

ED 370 507

New Perspectives for Student Affairs Professionals

Evolving Realities, Responsibilities and Roles

Peter H. Garland and Thomas W. Grace

HE027 467

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

June 1994
EDO-HE-93-7

ERIC® DIGEST

ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education; The George Washington University; One Dupont Circle, Suite 630; Washington, DC 20036

New Perspectives for Student Affairs Professionals
Evolving Realities, Responsibilities and Roles

Peter H. Garland and Thomas W. Grace

Colleges and universities today are confronted with a variety of changing conditions that demand attention; indeed, the formulation of appropriate and effective responses to a changing world has become increasingly important to institutions' vitality and viability. Changes in society, in the higher education enterprise, and in the types and characteristics of students are among those issues that must be addressed.

Increasingly, the efforts of student affairs aimed at improving student life, integrating new student groups, and attracting and retaining students are becoming critical to institutions attempting to maintain enrollments of qualified students, ensure academic achievement, place graduates, and develop supportive alumni. Institutions' use of these strategies in response to changing conditions creates opportunities for student affairs professionals to become leaders within institutions as they contribute significantly to institutions' viability. Under pressure to pare budgets, student affairs organizations must move quickly to demonstrate their centrality to institutional vitality or face disproportionate cuts in programs and services (Cage 1992).

To What Changes Must Student Affairs Organizations Respond?

Institutions and their student affairs organizations are confronted with various changes in their contexts and clienteles. The first of these trends, leading to change in society, is evidenced in uneven success with students from underrepresented groups in the education pipeline, demographic shifts, expanding use of information technologies, increasing violence, and the burden of debt. Second, institutions and their student affairs organizations must respond to the new accountability in higher education, even as public confidence in its colleges and universities erodes and new revenues become increasingly scarce. Colleges and universities find themselves subject to a growing array of state and federal statutes, regulations, initiatives, and judicial interventions.

In What Ways Can Student Affairs Offer Leadership to Respond to Changing Conditions?

In response to changing conditions, institutions are redoubling efforts to manage student enrollments--seeking new student clienteles while striving to retain students to graduation, employing quality management, modifying programs and services to meet students' changing needs, seeking new sources of revenues while searching to contain costs, building partnerships, and focusing efforts to enhance students' involvement on campus.

Current efforts on campus suggest increasing congruity between the traditional goals of student affairs and broader institutional goals; research on efforts by student affairs organizations aimed at student development, once regarded as peripheral, demonstrates increasing importance to an institution's vitality (Astin 1992; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991). Student affairs organizations enhance students' involvement, working to establish multicultural environments, confronting violence on campus, managing enrollments, and helping faculty to understand students unlike themselves. As recognition grows for student affairs professionals' efforts in pursuit of the traditional goals of student development, an expanded role for student affairs is demanded.

What New Role Is Emerging for Student Affairs?

The student affairs organization shares the orientations of faculty, students, and administrators, and its position on the borders of these groups could be its greatest strength:

> *Truly, student personnel workers have the opportunities to be central figures for campus improvement in an era when resources must be perceived as newly combined rather than as new* (Silverman 1980, p. 12).

Further:

> *If the developmental model emerged in part to supply a positive and less reactive approach to student life, then we must now move to the next step to incorporate a positive approach to institutional life and to respond positively to the issues facing our institutions* (Smith 1982, p. 57).

Failing to accept this challenge could prove costly to the profession:

> *Student personnel work in the next 50 years will be called upon to perform even more significant functions than it has for the past 50. If it responds with creativity, ingenuity, and flexibility, there is no doubt of its future. If, however, it becomes the agent of the status quo and mere tradition, other fields will assume its work, and it will be reduced to performing mere housekeeping functions* (Shaffer 1993, p. 167).

In accepting this challenge, student affairs professionals can become institutional integrators, creatively and collaboratively integrating students' and the institution's development.

Serving as integrators within institutions, student affairs professionals stand to become more centrally and integrally involved in the direction of the institution. They will do so, however, only if they are able to integrate and apply theories of student development and institutional development, work collaboratively with faculty and other administrators in developing comprehensive responses, and join with students in recognizing the increasing need to integrate institutional practices with societal challenges and opportunities.

What Implications Does This New Role Have for Student Affairs?

A new role for student affairs calls for changes in the programs and services offered by student affairs, the professional skills employed by student affairs professionals, and the content of the preparation and continuing development of professionals. Several programs and services stand to be enhanced by the changing role: enrollment management, the development of multicultural environments, and efforts to foster community service, activism, and service learning.

To assume a more central position of leadership in the institution, student affairs professionals must possess a wider repertoire of skills. Traditional skills required in the promotion of student development must be matched with the skills needed to help the student affairs professional serve as environmental scanner, milieu manager, market analyst, legal adviser, development officer, researcher, and quality assurance specialist. In short, student affairs professionals must continue to build their repertoire of skills to enable them to lead an institution's efforts to develop comprehensive responses to changing conditions.

The development of new skills for student affairs professionals has clear implications for the preparation and continuing professional development of individuals in the profession. Efforts to establish common learning for student affairs professionals are still young (Hunter and Comey 1991) but hold great promise for defining the profession and its practice. Preparation programs tend to focus on administration or counseling, while emerging roles for student affairs professionals call for professionals who are competent in both counseling and administration and are able to integrate the skills of each to serve students and their institutions. As a result, graduate preparation programs must incorporate such studies as organizational development, quality management, planning, evaluation and research, and current issues in higher education. Further, continuing professional education must work toward the development and enhancement of professional knowledge and skills for new roles.

A new role also creates challenges for the application of student development. If student development is to offer guidance to the profession and become more useful to the student affairs integrator, then (1) the understanding and application of student development must become more integrated with practice in student affairs, (2) student development theory must encompass an increasingly diverse student population, and (3) student development and organizational development must become better integrated.

To better serve as integrators within the institution, student affairs professionals must:

1. Assess and understand the institutional environment;
2. Foster collaborative problem solving;
3. Develop professional collaboration with faculty;
4. Disseminate strategic information on students, their expectations, needs, interests, and abilities;
5. Translate goals for student affairs to others in the institution in meaningful terms;
6. Contribute to the quality of the academic experience;
7. Contribute to the effective and efficient management of the institution; and
8. Develop skills for a broader role.

Institutions, if they are to take advantage of current and future contributions of student affairs professionals should:

1. Recognize, enhance, and support the efforts of student affairs;
2. Consider student affairs professionals full partners in the institution; and
3. Challenge student affairs professionals to make greater contributions to the institution.

In addition, student personnel preparation programs must be reconceptualized to develop the broader skills necessary for the profession, including greater attention to skills of leadership, such as planning, management, and evaluation. And finally, associations of student affairs professionals must:

1. Continue to provide direction for a changing profession; and
2. Provide and promote continuing professional education at all levels.

Selected References

Astin, Alexander W. 1992. *What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cage, M.C. 1992. "To Shield Academic Programs from Cuts, Many Colleges Pare Student Services." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 39: A25-A26.

Hunter, Deborah Ellen, and Danielle Comey. 1991. "Common Learning in Student Affairs." *NASPA Journal* 29: 10-16.

Pascarella, Ernest, and P.T. Terenzini. 1991. *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shaffer, Robert H. 1993. "Whither Student Personnel Work from 1968 to 2018? A 1993 Retrospective." *NASPA Journal* 30: 162-68.

Silverman, Robert J. 1980. "The Student Personnel Administrator as Leading Edge Leader." *NASPA Journal* 18: 10-15.

Smith, Daryl G. 1982. "The Next Step beyond Student Development: Becoming Partners within Our Institutions." *NASPA Journal* 19: 53-62.

This ERIC digest is based on a new full-length report in the ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report series, prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education in cooperation with the Association for the Study of Higher Education, and published by the School of Education at the George Washington University. Each report is a definitive review of the literature and institutional practice on a single critical issue. Many administrators subscribe to the series and circulate reports to staff and faculty committees with responsibility in a report's topic area. Reports are available through subscriptions for $98.00 per year ($108.00 outside the U.S.). Subscriptions begin with Report 1 and conclude with Report 8 of the current series year. Single copies, at $18.00 each, are available from: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports, The George Washington University, One Dupont Circle, Suite 630, Washington, DC 20036-1183. Or phone (202) 296-2597.

This publication was partially prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. ED RR-93-0200. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the department.

The George Washington University
WASHINGTON DC